

## How Consumerism Has Taken Over Cultures and How Sustainability Can Do the Same

Over the past century, we've seen cultures around the world change dramatically, with our identities, desires, and norms shifting to increasingly normalize high consumption lifestyles. This is at the root of our ecological crisis and so those interested in building a sustainable future must work to forge a new cultural path: one that normalizes sustainability. But no longer will it be enough to keep these efforts focused only in the political realm, but reformers must work to become cultural pioneers, transforming every aspect of cultures--from business and education, to the media and traditions. We must become founders of social enterprises, creators of stories and art that reinforce an ecological way of being, transformers of rituals and traditions, so that these naturalize sustainable ways of being, rebuilders of schools that will teach skills, ideas, and values that are relevant for life in today's full world, and creators of social movements that are truly movements and that reclaim power away from elites and better distribute resources and influence to those who will make better choices. Erik Assadourian, project director of *State of the World 2010: Transforming Cultures: From Consumerism to Sustainability*, will describe what this process could look like and share many real examples of efforts going on now around the world to transform cultures so that living sustainably becomes as natural as living as a consumer feels today.

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